

WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

survey results 2007/08

East Canadian High Arctic Light-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla hrota*

1. Abundance

For the sixth consecutive year, comprehensive coverage of sites in Iceland, Ireland, and the UK that support this population was undertaken in October. The census date was 6/7 October. Irish and UK sites were covered from the ground and Icelandic sites by aerial survey.

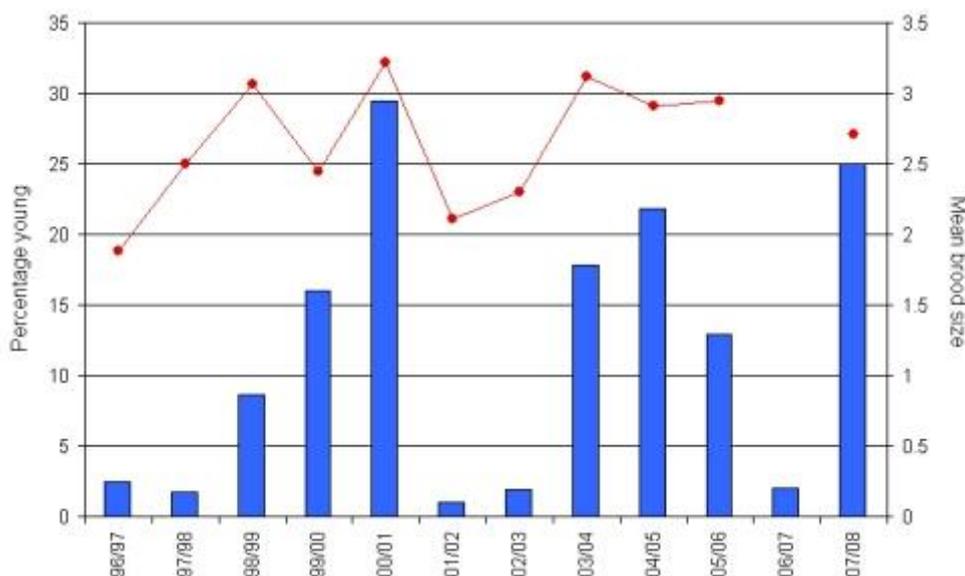
Results were received from 15 sites in Ireland, as well as those in Iceland. A total of 29,417 was counted at Strangford Lough, the main autumn site; other significant concentrations were at Lough Foyle (1,720) and Tralee Bay/Castlemaine Harbour (1,296). The survey in Iceland located 4,241 geese. With some data awaited, the total minimum number of birds counted was 38,852. With predicted numbers at sites where data remain outstanding it is likely that the population estimate was approximately 39,000.

Numbers of East Canadian High Arctic Light-bellied Geese recorded during the International Light-bellied Brent Goose Census in October 2007.

Site	Count
West Iceland	4,241
Islay	4
Lough Foyle	1,720
Larne Lough	101
Strangford Lough	29,417
Laytown	43
Clogher Head	5
Dunkalk Bay	834
Baldoyle Bay	3
Dublin Bay	301
Malahide Estuary	97
Bannow Bay	52
The Cull/Kilag	13
Tramore Backstrand	354
Castlemaine Harbour	627
Tralee Bay	669
Sligo Bays	371
Total	38,852

2. Breeding success

From a total of 10,070 geese aged, 25% were young, and of the 162 families recorded the mean brood size was 2.71 young per successful pair.



The mean percentage of young (blue columns) and mean brood size (red dots) of East Canadian High Arctic Light-bellied Brent Geese, 1996/97 to 2007/08. Note: no brood size data are available for 2006/07.

3. Discussion

Provisional results from the 2007 International Census of East Canadian High Arctic Light-bellied Brent Geese indicate numbers have increased by 30% since the previous year and reached their highest level to date. Breeding success was particularly good in 2007, the proportion of young being the highest recorded since 2000/01 (21.0%). An increase in overall abundance is, therefore, not unexpected. Overall, the trend of this population is currently increasing.

Numbers of East Canadian High Arctic Light-bellied Brent Geese have been gradually increasing since the first complete census in Ireland in 1960/61. Though there was a decline in the early 1990s, numbers rose again fairly rapidly and have now reached an all time high. Whilst the increase in total numbers can partly be attributed to an improvement in coverage and survey methodology since 2002/03, when the census also included counts from Iceland, it is clear that there has also been genuine and rapid growth in the population in recent years.

This report should be cited as:

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Goose & Swan Monitoring